Quid est secretum?

Visual Representation of Secrets in Early Modern Europe, 1500–1700

Edited by

Ralph Dekoninck
Agnès Guiderdoni
Walter S. Melion

BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

Contents

Acknowledgements xi
Notes on the Editors xii
Notes on the Contributors xv
List of Illustrations xxi

Introduction: What's in a Secret? 1
Ralph Dekoninck, Agnès Guiderdoni, and Walter S. Melion

PART 1
The Spiritual* locus *of Secret

1 In the Secrecy of the Cell: Late Medieval Carthusian Devotional Imagery and Meditative Practices in the Low Countries 13
Ingrid Falque

2 Jesus, Mary, and Joseph as Artisans of the Heart and Soul in Manuscript MPM R 35 *Vita S. Ioseph beatissimae Virginis sponsi* of ca. 1600 37
Walter S. Melion

3 Symbols and (Un)concealed Marian Mysteries in the First Litany of Loreto Illustrated with Emblems: Peter Stoergler's *Asma Poeticum* (Linz, 1636) 145
Carme López Calderón

4 'Teach Me, Reveal the Secret to My Heart': the Role of a Spiritual Guide in the Meditative Works of Marcin Hińcza 191
Alicja Bielak

PART 2
Science and Secrecy

5 Of Grids and Divine Mystery: Gerard Mercator's Revelation 231
Lee Palmer Wandel

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

6 What Did They See?: Science and Religion in the Anatomical Theatres of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries 260
Peter G.F. Eversmann

PART 3
The Secret in Matter

7 The Sienese Goldsmith and the Secrets of Florentine *Disegno* 287
C. Jean Campbell

8 An Open and Shut Case: On the Dialectic of Secrecy and Access in the Early-Modern Kunstkammer 316
Mark A. Meadow

9 Mysterious Noises: Orphic Strings, Rough Music, and the Sounds of Early Modern Ornament Prints 331
Madeleine C. Viljoen

10 'Insettinghe' and 'yegelijcx conversatie': Understanding of the Image on the Eve of Baroque 380
Koenraad Jonckheere

11 Roger de Piles and the Secret of Grace 397
Caecilie Weissert

PART 4
Secrecy and Sanctity: Negotiating Secular and Sacred Registers of the Secret

12 *In Abscondito*: Visuality and Testimony in Raphael's *Transfiguration* 429
Xavier Vert

13 Secrets of the Dark: Rembrandt's *Entombment* (c. 1654) 460
Alexandra Onuf

14 Poussin and Richeome: Mystery and Figurability 492
Ralph Dekoninck

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

15 Portrait or Parable?: Pierre Mignard and the Mystery of Madame de Maintenon 511
Eelco Nagelsmit & Lars Cyril Nørgaard

PART 5
Secrets of the* Ars symbolica*: Emblems and Enigmas

16 *Secret est à louer*: Secrets and Secrecy in French Baroque Cartography, 1580–1640 549
Tom Conley

17 Hidden in Plain Sight: Melchior Lorck's Emblematized Adages 572
Mara R. Wade

18 To Hide Is to Reveal: the Paradox of Representing Secrets 617
Agnès Guiderdoni

PART 6
Challenges of the Secret: Publicity, Performance, and Play

19 Getting to How-To: Chiromancy, Physiognomy, Metoscopy and Prints in Secrets' Service 635
Stephanie Leitch

20 The Answer Lies in the Eye of the Beholder: the Emblematic Ceiling Program in the Town Hall of Gdańsk 660
Monika Biel

21 Convents, Condottieri, and Compulsive Gamblers: Hands-On Secrets of Lorenzo Spirito's *Libro* 683
Suzanne Karr Schmidt

22 Secrecy and the Understanding of Small Things in Early Modern Italy 708
Bret L. Rothstein

Index Nominum 729

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

CHAPTER 12

In Abscondito: Visuality and Testimony in Raphael's *Transfiguration*

Xavier Vert

When* dealing with Christian history, painting is confronted with the duplicity of places, things, and events, what Erich Auerbach and Jean Daniélou taught us to recognize as figure.[1] Whether it be a question of flowers in a meadow, a feat, or a miraculous healing, large or small, these things, gestures, or events, situated in time, take on certain aspects, present themselves in a certain way: they are disguised and driven by a dynamic that turns them into temporary enigmas. This figurative duplicity, also recognizable as the very process of history, brings together what has happened with what has not yet happened and, by the anteriority of a future, looks at what is from the horizon of what will be, as its sign or testimony. A figure in the Christian sense of the word is an enigma that inverts and contracts time but also an enigma dispelled at the moment of its fulfilment. Such a secret disposition is deduced from the visual structure enunciated by Paul, and often, if not always, recalled within the exegetical tradition of the divine mysteries, as in 1 Cor. 13:12: 'For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror [*per speculum in enigmate*]; then we shall see face to face'. Thanks to its singular plasticity, the figure allows us to settle the mystery into the visible. In other words, the infinite network of figures woven into the Christian vision of history organises the visible according to the *economy* of mystery. It thus follows that a mystery, a *mysterium-sacramentum*, is figuratively adduced – if not accessible only by figures – and implies that the representation of its historical manifestation depends on the enigmatic arrangement or distribution of the visible;[2] in that respect, both visual and exegetical, the image – the pictorial mimesis – may be considered as a place

* For their generous insights and feedback on earlier drafts of this essay, I would like to thank warmly Walter S. Melion, Michel Weemans, and Giovanni Careri. My gratitude for their assistance to Véronique Eme-Martinez and Peter Briggs.

1 E. Auerbach, *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur* (Bern: 1946); J. Daniélou, *Sacramentum futuri: essai sur les origines de la typologie biblique* (Paris: 1950).

2 On the difficulty of determining in the patristic and exegetical tradition, after Paul, a stable semantic distinction between mystery-*mysterium* and mystery-*sacramentum*, cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *L'économie sacramentelle du salut* (*De sacramentele Heilseconomie*), trans.

© KONINKLIJKE BRILL NV, LEIDEN, 2020 | DOI:10.1163/9789004432260_014
For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

of passage for figures, a polarised field, or a medium.[3] Following on from this approach, this essay attempts to provide a comparative perspective on mystery and visuality, secrecy and temporality, through the last and most famous painting of Raphael Urbino: *The Transfiguration* (1516–1520) [Fig. 12.1]. Indeed, since Vasari's time, the altarpiece commissioned by Cardinal Giulio de' Medici for Narbonne Cathedral – neither the *tavola* nor the copy made on purpose by Raphael's workshop has been sent to France[4] – is considered as Raphael's artistic and spiritual testament, albeit no single interpretation has received general recognition.[5]

Y. van der Have (Fribourg: 2004); R. Stefaniak, "Replicating Mysteries of the Passion: Rosso's *Dead Christ with Angels*", *Renaissance Quarterly* 45, 4 (1992) 677–738.

3 On this conception of medium, mediality, and image, see H. Belting, "Image, Medium, Body: A New Approach to Iconology", *Critical Inquiry* 31, 2 (2005) 302–319. In an essay close to the questions discussed here, Marsha Libina presents and examines the medial status of the image in a theological and political context where images have been specifically involved in the debate on biblical hermeneutics: 'In the early decades of the 1500s, religious images entered into a way of thinking that was fundamental to how Catholic exegetes at this moment conceived of the biblical text: as figurative and referential in nature, in other words, as a "mediated truth." Image-makers thus took to their own pictorial medium to reflect on the unresolved questions of prophecy and scriptural exegesis. The theological debate and the [Lateran] council's conflicted position on the mediation of scripture, in particular, prompted new ways of thinking about the figuration of divinity that were specific to questions concerning the hermeneutics of the man-made image and the medial status of art when representing the divine'. "'False Prophecies,' Scripture, and the Crisis of Mediation in Early Modern Rome: Sebastiano del Piombo's Borgherini Chapel in San Pietro in Montorio", *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 11, 1 (2018) 67–104, 78.

4 The panel of almost equal size (396 × 263 cm), dated ca. 1520–28, later became part of the collections of the Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. See T. Henry and P. Joannides, *Raphaël: Les dernières années* (Paris: 2012) 174–177.

5 The modern literature on Raphael's *Transfiguration* is endless; only the studies cited throughout the text are indicated here. With respect to the incompleteness of the painting, upon the artist's death, cf. F. Mancinelli, "La Trasfigurazione e la Pala di Monteluce: Considerazioni sulla loro tecnica esecutiva alla luce dei recenti restauri", in Shearman J. – Hall M.B. (eds.), *The Princeton Raphael Symposium: Science in the Service of Art History* (Princeton: 1990) 149–160. For a genetic and interpretive approach, cf. K. Oberhuber, "Vorzeichnungen zu Raffaels 'Transfiguration'", *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 4 (1962) 116–149; H. Von Einem, *Die "Verklärung Christi" und die "Heilung des Besessenen" von Raffael* (Wiesbaden: 1966). On the figure of *christus medicus*, the discussion between Posner and Shearman remains essential: K.W.G. Posner, "Raphael's Transfiguration and the Legacy of Leonardo", *Art Quarterly* 35, 4 (1972) 343–374; idem, *Leonardo and Central Italian Art* (*1515–1550*) (New York: 1974); J. Shearman, *Raphael's Cartoons in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen and the Tapestries for the Sistine Chapel* (London: 1972); idem, "Raphael's Clouds, and Correggio's", in Sambucco Hamoud M. – Strocchi M.L. (eds.), *Studi su Raffaello*: *Atti del congresso internazionale di studi. Urbino-Firenze, 6–14 avril 1984* (Urbino: 1987) 657–668; idem, *Raphael in Early Modern Sources, 1483–1602* (New Haven – London: 2003). Also see E.H. Gombrich, "The Ecclesiastical

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

FIGURE 12.1 Raphael, *Transfiguration* (ca. 1516–1520). Oil on panel, 404 × 278 cm
VATICAN MUSEUMS, ROME

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

1 Mystery and Figurability

Presented in the Gospels as aiming to demonstrate the majesty of Christ and to prevent the scandal of his humiliation, the mystery of the Transfiguration paradoxically highlights the secrecy of Christ in Jesus, his hidden dignity and future glory; what indeed comes to light is the procession (*processio*) of the Son. Such a theophany is both proclaimed beneath the veil of mystery (*velamine mysteriorum*), accessible only by faith, and chronicled in the Synoptics – the pericope of the Transfiguration – as a sudden and dazzling appearance eyewitnessed by three disciples, James, John, and Peter. Therefore, what was hidden or opaque – reserved in the opacity of the flesh – becomes manifest, in view of its revelation. The mystery of glory (*doxa*, *gloria*) is both the act of visibility – its vision-audition – and the act of potency in the transformed body of Christ. Mystery of figurability on one hand, of a phenomenal presence in which the splendour of the parousiac body of Christ is implied by mode of transitory

Significance of Raphael's *Transfiguration*", in *Ars auro prior: Studia Ioanni Bialostocki sexagenario dicata* (Warsaw: 1981) 241–243; idem, *New Light on Old Masters: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance IV* (Oxford: 1986); C. King, "The Liturgical and Commemorative Allusions in Raphael's *Transfiguration and Failure to Heal*", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 45 (1982) 148–159; J.C. Forte, "Fictive Truths and Absent Presence in Raphael's 'Transfiguration'", *Notes in the History of Art* 3, 4 (1984), 45–56; R. Preimesberger, "Tragische Motive in Raffaels *Transfiguration*", in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 50 (1987) 88–115; G. Bendersky, "Remarks on Raphael's 'Transfiguration'", *Notes in the History of Art* 14, 4 (1995) 18–25; J. Cranston, "Tropes of Revelation in Raphael's *Transfiguration*", *Renaissance Quarterly* 56, 1 (2003) 1–25. The seminal pages that Daniel Arasse devoted to the theme of vision in Raphael's painting are still decisive: "Extases et visions béatifiques à l'apogée de la Renaissance: quatre images de Raphaël", in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome: Moyen-Age, Temps modernes* 84, 2 (1972) 403–492, idem., *Les visions de Raphaël* (Paris: 2003). More recently, see J. Meyer Zur Capellen, *Raphael: A Critical Catalogue of His Painting* (Landshut: 2005), vol. 2, *The Roman Religious Paintings, ca. 1508–1520*, 195–209; C.K. Kleinbub, "Raphael's *Transfiguration* as Visio-Devotional Programme", *Art Bulletin* 90 (2008) 367–93, idem, *Vision and Visionary in Raphael* (University Park, PA: 2011). In 1516 another artist present in Rome, Sebastiano del Piombo, worked on the decoration of the Borgherini chapel in San Pietro in Montorio. In a very competitive artistic context, Giulio de' Medici entrusted Sebastiano, assisted by Michelangelo, with a second altarpiece of equal dimensions, *The Resurrection of Lazarus*. For a comparative analysis of both paintings, see J. Pope-Hennessy, *Raphael: The Wrightsman Lectures* (London: 1970), esp. 71f.; C. Barbieri, "The Competition between Raphael and Michelangelo and Sebastiano's Role in It", in Hall M.B. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Raphael* (Cambridge: 2005) 141–164. On the siting of the painting in San Pietro in Montorio, cf. Alexander Linke, "Vasari and *The Transfiguration of Christ*: Converting the Testaments and Competing with Predecessors", in Melion W.S. – Clifton J. – Weemans M. (eds.), *Imago Exegetica: Visual Images as Exegetical Instruments, 1400–1700* (Leiden – Boston: 2014), 923–958.

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

passion, '*per modum passionis transeuntis*', says Thomas Aquinas.[6] *Figurability* of the mystery, on the other hand, in the narrative of its testimony – the Synoptics – as represented in the altarpiece painted by Raphael.[7] More than figures, elements of history, or contents of meaning, what text and image essentially share is the *absconditus*, the character of what is hidden or concealed, that is to say reserved. Leo the Great asserts the Christological significance of this character in his homily on the Transfiguration, a significance that is in fact enshrined in the secret of the sovereign glory of Christ.[8] The Latin patristic exegesis, the homily of Leo the Great in particular, assumes the visual relationship between secrecy and glory: the '*regia claritate*' (kingly brilliance) of the transfigured Christ, penetrating the visible for a short time, is only the prefiguration of the parousiac light, and the vision of this transitory brightness, made visible to the three disciples, becomes in itself a figure of the '*inefabilem et inaccessibilem visionem*' (ineffable and unapproachable vision) reserved to the chosen in eternal life.[9] This indicates that the secret represented in the vision possesses a fundamental anagogical and soteriological value, underlined and transmitted by Thomas Aquinas, whose significance is evident during the first quarter of the sixteenth century.[10]

The spiritual or mystical meaning associated with the vision of the transfigured Christ is in line with a political and religious context marked by an aspiration for the internal renewal of the Church and the strengthening of the institution of faith up to the limits of its states as well as in the principle of their unity. The liturgical celebration of the Transfiguration was officially established in 1457, in commemoration of the victory over the Turks following

6 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 3a, q. 45, art. 2 co.

7 According to the chiasmus to which Louis Marin has drawn our attention in his analysis of the Italian Annunciations of the Quattrocento, here it is essential: *Opacité de la peinture*, rev. ed. (Paris: 2006), chapter 5, "Annonciations toscanes", 159–201, esp. 173–181. When it comes to the theophanic mystery of the Transfiguration more specifically, the issue becomes, in Marin's words, that of the very process of figurability, and even 'trans-figurability', as transcendental conditions of possibility for the visible, visuality, and the figure as such: L. Marin, *Pouvoirs de l'image: gloses* (Paris: 1993), "Glose 8. La Transfiguration", 233–249. For a review of Marin's gloss on *The Transfiguration*, see D. Guastini, "Transfiguration, figure, figurabilité chez Louis Marin", *La part de l'œil* 31 (2017–18) 49–59.

8 Leo the Great, *Sermons*, 38 (LI), "A Homily Delivered on the Saturday before the Second Sunday in Lent – On the Transfiguration", 1–8; Léon le Grand, *Sermons*, III (38–64), ed. A. Chavasse, trans. D.R. Dolle (Paris: 2004) 38 (LI), 1–8, 21–35.

9 *Ibidem*, 38 (LI), 2, 26–27. On the soteriological value of Leo the Great's interpretation of the Transfiguration, see B. Green, *The Soteriology of Leo the Great* (New York: 2008), esp. 184–186.

10 See J.M. Greenstein, "'How Glorious the Second Coming of Christ': Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* and the Transfiguration", *Artibus et Historiae* 10, 20 (1989) 33–57.

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

the Battle of Belgrade (July 1456).[11] This mystical regeneration of the power of the Church's influence finds a new relevance under the pontificate of Leo X (1513–1521).[12] The reformist pressure, from the Council of Pisa until the closing of the Lateran Council in 1517, also emphasised the redemptive value of the Transfiguration and its prophetic content.[13] On this point, recent historiography has highlighted the role of a Joachimist-inspired text widely diffused in the circles of the Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, commissioner of the painting. The manuscript of the *Apocalypsis Nova* attributed to the Franciscan friar Amedeo Menes da Silva was purported to have been rediscovered in 1502 under mysterious conditions in San Pietro in Montorio and handed to the Franciscan theologian Giorgio Benigno Salviati for opening.[14] The text strongly emphasises the understanding of the Transfiguration *sacramentum* within a mystic of salvation, predicting the reformation of the Church and the imminence of a bright kingdom.[15] We should add that Menes da Silva was the re-founder of the Roman church of San Pietro in Montorio, where the cardinal Giulio de' Medici decided that Raphael's painting should be transported shortly after the artist's death, in 1522, instead of being sent to Narbonne Cathedral in France.

As far as the figurative space of the painting is concerned, the *absconditus* (the character of what is reserved) seems to be displayed in two apparently antagonistic places or states. First, in the luminous emanation of the transfigured Christ: 'His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light' (Matt. 17:2); and second in a state of opacity (*opacitas*), what is literally

11 Cf. P. Lamarche, "Transfiguration du Seigneur", *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité: ascétique et mystique, doctrine et histoire*, 17 vols. (Paris: 1991), vol. 15, 1148–1151.

12 L. von Pastor, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, 40 vols., 5th ed. (London: 1923), vol. 7, chapters 3–5, 114–254.

13 The urgency of a spiritual renewal and its importance in the choice of the commission, as well as the role at various levels of personalities such as Denis Briçonnet and Egidio da Viterbo are studied by Arasse, "Extases et visions béatifiques à l'apogée de la Renaissance: quatre images de Raphaël". On the more peculiar influence, in the Franciscan circle of San Pietro in Montorio, of Bernardino Carvajal and Giorgio Benigno, cf. J. Jungic, "Joachimist Prophecies in Sebastiano del Piombo's Borgherini's Chapel and Raphael's Transfiguration", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 51 (1988), 66–83.

14 On the manuscript itself and the conditions of its reception, see A. Morisi, *Apocalypsis Nova: Ricerche sull'origine e la formazione del testo dello pseudo-Amadeo* (Rome: 1970).

15 *Ibidem*, esp. 29f.; see also Jungic, "Joachimist Prophecies", esp. 70–79; M. Reeves (ed.), *Prophetic Rome in the High Renaissance Period* (Oxford: 1992); and the recent contribution of S. Pasti, "*L'Apocalypsis Nova:* Giulio dei Medici e i quadri per la Cattedrale di Narbone", *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift* 81, 4 (2012) 231–237. The argument is taken up by Henry and Joannides, *Raphaël*, 164f.

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

opposed to light: the shadow.[16] At the heart of the painting of the luminous vision, Raphael leaves an undefined, blank, or opaque space, more precisely an interval between two places. Such a contrast between transparency and opacity, enlightenment and shadow, refers to a double problem, both aspects of which are interwoven, a problem well known to scholars. The first one is aesthetic, referring to the dark tonality promoted by Leonardo da Vinci, this *certa oscurità*, which becomes the *maniera nera* (dark manner) that Raphaël inexplicably abused, says Vasari, in the lower half of the *Transfiguration.*[17] This textual addition to the second edition of *Le Vite*, attributing the obscuring of the background, place, and figures to the effects of time on an unstable pictorial material, masks a negative aesthetic judgement. It is hardly possible to produce here the discussion on the deliberate or, on the contrary, the accidental nature of the violence of the shadows in the lower part of the painting and, in particular, on the balance established between the opacity and diaphanousness in the overall configuration, but we should at least mention Sebastiano del Piombo's earlier and direct testimony, in the context of the open competition with Raphael. In a letter to Michelangelo dated July 1518, Sebastiano denounced in even harsher terms the fuliginous manner of *The Holy Family of Francis I*, dating from that same year, with its figures so strongly contrasted that they 'seem to have gone through smoke'.[18]

16 All Latin quotations from the Bible and the Gospels are from the Vulgate; references to the modern Bible are from the New International Version (NIV).

17 "E se non avesse in questa opera, quasi per capriccio, adoperato il nero di fumo da stampatori, il quale, come più volte si è detto, di sua natura diventa sempre col tempo più scuro ed offende gl'altri colori, coi quali e mescolato; credo che quell'opera sarebbe ancor fresca come quando egli la fece, dove oggi pare piuttosto tinta che altrimenti", G. Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architetti* (Florence: 1568), part 3, vol. 1, 86. Vasari also criticizes Fra Bartolomeo for the same reasons. From a technical point of view, the restoration of the painting (1972–76) revealed the use of black pigment in shaded areas, a use that is by no means unprecedented. Cf. Mancinelli, "La Trasfigurazione e la Pala di Monteluce: Considerazioni sulla loro tecnica esecutiva alla luce dei recenti restauri". On the issue of chiaroscuro, see among others M.B. Hall, *Color and Meaning: Practice and Theory in Renaissance Painting* (Cambridge: 1992), 131f.; K.W.G. Posner, "Raphael's *Transfiguration* and the Legacy of Leonardo"; L. Caron, "Choice concerning modes of modelling during the high Renaissance and after", *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 48 (1985) 476–89. Margriet van Eikema Hommes provides an overview of the discussion while attempting to restore the validity of Vasari's interpretation: "Discoloration or Chiaroscuro? An Interpretation of the Dark Areas in Raphael's 'Transfiguration of Christ'", *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 28, 1/2 (2000–2001) 4–43.

18 "Io non vi dirò altro che pareno figure che siano state al fumo, o vero figure de ferro che luceno, tutte chiare e tutte nere, et desegnate al modo ve dirà Leonardo", in Poggi G. – Barocchi P. – Ristori R. (eds.), *Il Carteggio di Michelangelo*, 5 vols. (Florence: 1965–83), vol. 2, 32; see also V. Golzio, *Raffaello nei documenti, nelle testimonianze dei contemporanei*

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

The second problem, of an interpretive nature, is caused by the association in the painting of two episodes of the Gospels, separate from each other: Christ's Transfiguration, as represented in the upper half of the picture, and the presentation of the so-called lunatic (the possessed boy) to the disciples who are unable to heal him, which is depicted in the lower part and in the foreground of the painting. In the Synoptics, this latter episode does not constitute a pericope as such; it is only mentioned as being contemporary with the Transfiguration, when Christ, who descended from Mount Tabor, encountered the family of the lunatic. In the testamentary narrative there is already a relation of absence or delayed presence, a connection between delay and distance, of power manifested, on one hand, and manifest powerlessness on the other. The split nature of the scene on which all the commentators have focused in order to legitimize its coherence or, on the contrary, to contest it, may well be the reflection of the historical structure of the evangelical narrative and the principle of its messianic economy. The inscription of the narrative-testimony of the Transfiguration in the painting, which is what perhaps the painting reflects, would be determined by what is formulated there *in abscondito*: not the expression of a truth stolen at the heart of a *secretum* but, of the mystery itself, what takes place in the secrecy of its manifestation, in the signs of the announcement and the testimony.

2 Economy of Vision

In front of the imposing painting (405 × 278 cm), which was for a long period visible above the high altar of San Pietro in Montorio, in Rome, and which is now displayed in the Vatican galleries, the viewer is placed in the position of grasping in an overall vision what is above and what is below, of beholding what is separated in one single glance – a same *telos*. At first, the viewer is exposed to the *pathos* of disjunction whose particular drama is simultaneously given to be seen and read in the lower part of the painting [Fig. 12.2]. Appearing from the right edge of the frame, surrounded by the people who designate him and present him to the disciples – strictly speaking, an "apostrophe" – the lunatic son of the Gospels embodies here, through the *difficoltà* of his posture and even the ecstatic detail of his divergent gaze, the mimic forces of dissociation. In other words, his twisted body and blind gaze

e nella letteratura del suo secolo (1936; reprint, Gregg International – Farnborough, Hants: 1971) 70–71.

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

FIGURE 12.2 Detail of Fig. 12.1: presentation of the possessed boy to the disciples

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

are not only a somatic and paroxysmal expression of illness or possession,[19] they also operate in the phatic and metapictorial dimensions of the painting.[20]

The dramatic emphasis of the action – of which the boy is the eccentric focus – has been stressed as a counterpoint to the radiance and royalty of Christ, such a polarization legitimating the dual structure of the painting.[21] Underlining the coherence of the composition, then contested, Goethe, during his stay in Rome, gave the best account of this tension:

> How can one sever what is above from what is below? The two are one. Below, there is suffering and neediness, and above, active mercy, the one reflecting upon the other in mutual interchange. Is it then possible to express the meaning of this painting in a different way, to separate from the real its ideal relevance?[22]

According to Goethe, what the painting discloses – but isn't it precisely what sets it apart? – lies in the reciprocal involvement of its top and bottom parts, and the scenes of the Gospel to which these parts refer, as well as in the unity achieved between immanence and transcendence. This allegorical reading of the aesthetic completeness – of a painting that *represents* its meaning – provides a major interpretive axis. It suggests that the unity of such an antithetical configuration is objective or ideal and not fundamentally dependent on the nature of the effects on the viewer and on his imaginative or devotional participation. This other possibility draws a second axis: the *tavola* of the Transfiguration, seen in the liturgical and institutional context of its

19 On the diagnostic approach, see M. Brock responding to epileptologists: "Le possédé dans la Transfiguration de Raphaël: un détail?" in *Daniel Arasse: Historien de l'art* (Paris: 2010) 153–164.

20 In agreement on this point with the remarks of James D. Herbert, "The Son That Does Not Shine in Raphael's *Transfiguration*", *World and Image* 24, 2 (2008) 167–198, 192. See above all Preimesberger, "Tragische Motive in Raffaels *Transfiguration*" 106f. Kleinbub convincingly associates the boy's visual infirmity and the opposing forces that run through it with the theme of natural and spiritual vision. He also points to the particular connection that this opposition has with Raphael's own *Blinding of Elymas*, 'wherein spiritual and physical blindness is figured in the confrontation of Elymas with the prophetic Paul', *Vision and Visionary in Raphael*, chapter 5, "Raphael's Transfiguration as Visio-Devotional Program", 122–145, 130. On the role played by the kneeling woman in the foreground, decisive in the rhetorical configuration, see J. Cranston, "Tropes of Revelation in Raphael's *Transfiguration*"; J.C. Forte, "Fictive Truths and Absent Presence in Raphael's 'Transfiguration'".

21 See Preimesberger, "Tragische Motive in Raffaels *Transfiguration*" 106f.

22 J.W. von Goethe, *Italiensische Reise*, December 1787, 1, 152; *Italian Journey*, trans. W.H. Auden – E. Mayer (London: 1970), 433.

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

commission, belongs to the devotional imagination and contributes to defining or remodelling its practices. In this respect, Raphael's invention is far from isolated but rather collects and crystallizes features that are part of the evolution of altar painting and its devotional or liturgical physiognomy around 1500 in Italy.[23]

The long-standing tendency to literalize the field of the devotional image, the verticalization of the format, and the division of the functional registers of altar painting are all elements on which the composition of the *Transfiguration* is based. Two phenomena are particularly relevant. On one hand, the assimilation and contamination of narrative patterns of theophanic themes, such as the Assumption, the Transfiguration, and the Resurrection, to which we will return later. On the other hand, the splitting of the representation into a worldly register and a register of supraworldly apparition – *The Madonna of Foligno* and *The Ecstasy of St Cecilia*, also by Raphael, are major examples – increases the metapictural conditions for shaping the visionary experience and the theme of the vision as such. Internal vision and pictorial image interpenetrate each other. However, since the Transfiguration is not a beatific vision but a historical one, the ascensional motive and the imaginary solution are combined within the dimension of the narrative. The polarization of the pictorial space of the *Transfiguration* is articulated by elements of iconic presentation and narrative presentation: the register of the manifestation in itself (the *phainein*) and the historical register that the apparition reconfigures as scene, even as drama, according to the place, the protagonists, and the pattern of action. The meditative modality of the devotional image, whose iconic stability, in terms of model and balance, seemed to be the guarantee, is therefore recomposed in the complex relationship between history and contemplation of figures, the effect of presence, and aspects according to which the representation either leads the gaze, directs it, or retains it. The vision of Christ is indeed ambiguous; internal as well as external, both presented to the viewer as a vision and represented as a diegetic image or a mediating device. In addition, the principle of 'amplification' is not sufficient to account for the multiplication and interaction of

23 See H. Damisch, *Théorie du nuage: Pour une histoire de la peinture* (Paris: 1972); J. Burckhardt – P. Humphrey, *The Altarpiece in Renaissance Italy* (New York: 1988); H. Belting, *Bild und Kult: Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst* (Munich: 1990); P. Humphrey – M. Kemp (eds.), *The Altarpiece in Renaissance Venice* (Cambridge – New York: 1991); A. Nagel, *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art* (Cambridge: 2000), part 1, 25–135; V. Stoichita, *Visionary Experience in the Golden Age of Spanish Art* (London: 1995); and more recently, G. Cassegrain, *Représenter la vision: Figuration des apparitions miraculeuses dans la peinture italienne de la Renaissance* (Arles: 2017).

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

figures in a situation that is extended to history painting.[24] By overdetermining the temporal aspect of the miracle – the moment of vision – through the unresolved action of the combined scene – the apostrophe – Raphael's altarpiece calls for the hermeneutical cooperation as well as the imaginative involvement of the Christian viewer.

At the heart of the mystery – the very moment of the Transfiguration – is the secrecy of its proclamation: while Peter was still speaking to Christ, 'a bright cloud covered them [Peter, James, and John], and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"' (Matt. 17:5). The '*nubis lucida*' (bright cloud) that, in Matthew's text, surrounds the disciples like a shadow (*obumbrabit eos*), is closely connected with the mystery of the Incarnation and, more specifically, with the secrecy of its announcement, the 'overshadowing', the *obumbrare*, of the Divine Verb.[25] It is in the principle of light and by the phenomenalization of the Verb under the sensitive modes, both visual and vocal, that the *mysterium tremendum* of the divine might and power is manifested: 'When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified' (Matt. 17:6). If we focus on the upper part of Raphael's painting, we can grasp the manifestation of God's power in the form of an enunciation-secretion that carries within it the double event or phenomenon of the light without shadow in which the Christ is shrouded and an umbratile envelopment of the luminous cloud. Of the brightness, source of the vision and sign of the Transfiguration, one is tempted to say that it secretes the royalty of Christ, of the numinous cloud, that it hides and reveals at one and the same time the Father. If we refer to the *modello* for the first version [Fig. 12.3], which does not yet include the episode of the lunatic, we realize that the vision has been originally thought in accordance with the narrative and figurative economy of the mystery; it is based on the appearance of the Father within a cherubic and modulated cloud that combines the incorporeal light and the nebulous shadow of his *virtus*, on one hand, and on the vision of the Son transfigured in the brightness of his transcendent glory on the other. The transition to the bipartite structure, as planned by the second *modello* (after 1516) [Fig. 12.4], did not only have the effect, if not the purpose,

24 As proposed by Erwin Panofsky, then taken up by S. Ringbom, *Icon to Narrative: The Rise of the Dramatic Close-up in Fifteenth-Century Devotional Painting*, Acta Academiae Aboensis, ser. A XXXI, no. 2 (Åbo: 1965).

25 The Latin *obumbrare*, translating the Greek verb *episkiasein*, is also the expression contained in Luke 1:35 for the announcement of the incarnation: 'The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you'. I refer to the valuable comments of V. Stoichita, *Brève histoire de l'ombre* (Geneva: 2000), 68; see also Marin, *Opacité de la peinture* 166; "Glose 8. La Tranfiguration", in *Pouvoirs de l'image: gloses*, 233–249, 246.

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

FIGURE 12.3 After Raphael, *Modello for the Transfiguration* (ca. 1516–17). Pen and brown wash with white heightening, 40.2 × 27.2 cm
ALBERTINA, VIENNA, INV. 193

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

FIGURE 12.4 After Gian Francesco Penni, after Raphael, *Modello for the Transfiguration* (after 1516). Pen and brown ink, wash, and black chalk, 41.3 × 27.4 cm
MUSÉE DU LOUVRE, DÉPARTEMENT DES ARTS GRAPHIQUES, PARIS, INV. 3954

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

of emphasizing the dramatic forces of disjunction and the tension between the iconic regime and the narrative regime of the image; it also modified the very economy of the vision, making the Son appear in the Father, the dazzling brightness of Christ's transformation in the cloudiness – the numinous cloud – of his *dynamis*. What the vision thus formed literally brings to light is the procession of the son as the image or reflection of the father. In doing so, it also assumes the eschatological aim that underlies the miraculous appearance of Christ – the relation between historical glory and eschatological glory – predicted by Christ himself just before he was transfigured: '*Filius enim hominis venturus est in gloria Patris*' (for the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory) (Matt. 16:27).[26] This luministic exegesis depends on a logic of conversion of the qualities into refracted luminous intensities in the chromatic plan of the painting. The radiant Christocentrism of the *Transfiguration*, as well as the atmospheric deflagration of the small painting *The Vision of Ezekiel*, realized by Raphael in 1518 [Fig. 12.5], testify, as Vasari already emphasized, to the luministic strength of Raphael's last paintings and their close relations with the spiritual significance of light in the biblical and evangelic exegesis. John Shearman highlighted in the painting of Ezekiel's vision the fusion between the clarity and sparkling characteristics of the glow of the vermeil in Ezekiel's text (Ez. 10, Ap. 4);[27] Gregory the Great's commentary on the prophetic vision, which is equally essential, can be read in close connection with the luministic subtlety of the *Transfiguration*. Gregory the Great interprets the *electrum* (the vermeil) of divine glory as the best image of the union of the human and the divine achieved in Christ: that *something* which 'exceeds gold in *claritas* (the quality of silver), and exceeds silver in *fulgor* (the quality of gold)'.[28] Raphael's modal luminism, his dark manner that is by no means a negation or a simple reversal, is indeed an expression of the revealed glory on the mountain, but it also depends on the dynamic process of vision and its imprint on the viewer. In that regard, we may assume the influence of the Neoplatonic metaphysics of light, observable in the annular cloud on which Christ appears – whose shape is clearly underlined in the workshop's replica of the painting[29] – and moreover perceptible through the *anagogical progression* that the distribution of colours and lights enables within the painting. Marsilio Ficino establishes this

26 Jesus is transfigured 'about eight days after [he] said this', according to Luke 9:28; 'six days after', according to Matthew (17).

27 Shearman, "Raphael's Clouds, and Correggio's" 661.

28 *Ibidem*; *Sancti Gregorii Homiliae in Hiezechihelem prophetam* [Hom. in Ezech.], ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 142 (Turnholti: 1971), II, 14.

29 Whereas many engravers, like Cornelis Cort, for instance, restore the more immediately intelligible mandorla's shape; see Shearman, "Raphael's Clouds, and Correggio's" 666.

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

FIGURE 12.5 Raphael, *The Vision of Ezekiel* (ca. 1518). Oil on panel, 40 × 30 cm
GALLERIA PALATINA, PALAZZO PITTI, FLORENCE

progression in his *Essays on Light* (1476–1494),[30] from the black and brown, very opaque colours of the lowest regions up to the degrees that surpass white (*albus*) in the bright whiteness (*candore*), brilliance (*fulgor*), and splendour (*splendor*) of the invisible and spiritual light. This scale of intensities alluding to the elevation of the soul as a spiritual progress placed in man is, however,

30 M. Ficino, *Liber de sole et lumine* (Florence, Antonio Miscomini: 1493), "De lumine", VI; idem, "De lumine" (VI), in *Métaphysique de la lumière* (*opuscules, 1476–1492*), Reynaud J. – Galland S. (trans.) (Paris: 2008) 134–135.

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

linked to the process of metamorphosis described by Paul, to which Ficino explicitly refers in the *De Lumine*:

> Therefore, it is worth separating the sublunar light from darkness and the celestial light from matter, then from there rising to the supernatural light, and from rational light to intellectual light, and from it [...] to divine light, so that, guided by the revealed face, [...] we may gradually transform ourselves from clarity to clarity, into the same image.[31]

Together with the figuration of the vision in its historical and iconic dimensions, Raphael proposes a vertical reading that calls for an ascending gaze. The shift from instrumental, direct, and punctual light, which engenders penumbral shadows, to diffuse and universal or substantial light, to take on the language of Leonardo da Vinci, the diaphanous lightening of colours from earthly matter to supernatural clarity – all evoke the analogy developed by the metaphysics of splendour.[32] However, the tension already involved in Ficino's text animates the visual field of the picture even more. Could this other transfiguration to which the Christian aspires, his transformation and homologation in the glorious body of Christ, – major echo of the historical theme of the Transfiguration – be obtained from the progressive journey towards the uncreated light? The dramatic strength of the vision depicted also lies in the logic of the visual ruptures (transversal and diagonal) that the mystery produces on the pictorial surface, expressing a more directly fideistic aspiration.[33] The contemplative imagination probably no longer offers a solution of continuity with faith.

---

31 Ibidem, "*De lumine*", VI (the translation is mine): 'Quamobrem operae pretium est, et hoc sub luna lumen a caligine, et coeleste illud a materia segregare, et illinc ad lumen supercoeleste conscendere, illinc rursus a rationali luce ad intellectualem, ab hac ad intelligibilem, ab hac pro viribus ad divinam, ut revelata facie ducti videlicet a domini spiritu a claritate gradatim in claritatem in eamdem imaginem transformemur'. Ficino follows Paul in 2 Cor. 3:18: 'And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed (*metamorphoumetha*) into his image (*eikona*) with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit'. This contemplation carries the double implication of a metamorphosis (*metamorphein*) and a conformation or conformity (*summorphon*), according to the formula proposed in Phil. 3:21: 'The Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform (*summorphon*) our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body'.

32 See A. Chastel, *Marsile Ficin et l'art* (Geneva: 1996), 91f.

33 On the tension and exchanges between the fideistic approach, spiritual devotion, and Neoplatonism in the first decades of the sixteenth century, see Arasse, *Les visions de Raphaël* 82f.

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

3 Secrecy and Testimony

Not enough attention has been paid to the testimonial and messianic meanings of Raphael's *Transfiguration*. The mystery indeed takes place, and this place, from the messianic point of view, is what happens between the two announcements of the Passion of Christ recorded in the Synoptics: an interval of time (a few days) that also includes the episode of the lunatic's healing. In that respect the division of Raphael's composition could also be considered as a *figure* of the messianic interval. Framed by the two announcements of the Passion, the picture of the transfiguration represents a messianic unity whereas the testimony, a messianic expression par excellence, operates by separating (in space) and connecting (in time). This structure, both conjunctive and disjunctive, is essential to the figurative logic of the painting.

In the first place, the Transfiguration, as Jesus's identification with the Christ of the Parousia, rests on the *aside* of the vision: 'And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves' (Matt. 17:2). The vision therefore depends on the figure and number of witnesses: 'in the presence of those five men might most truly be fulfilled what was said: "In two or three witnesses stands every word" [Deut. 19:15]', comments Leo the Great.[34] Because he gathers a large congregation – all the apostles – and then distinguishes them according to register, place, and pose, Raphael manifests the separation of the witness's speech-vision like none other before him. At the top, Christ and the two prophets hover (Moses and Elijah); at the bottom or at the front, the three separate disciples (Peter, James, and John) are lying on the ground. To the scene thus structured, Raphael adds a second visionary instance in a subsidiary and elliptical place, on the left edge of the painting: two characters in deacons' clothes, identified as Justus and Pastor, patron saints of the cathedral of Narbonne – for which the painting was commissioned – or Felicissimus and Agapitus, their saint's day celebrated on the same day as the Transfiguration.[35] In both cases, two witnesses of Christ, in the full and philological sense of the word: two Christian martyrs. They are the only ones attending the colloquium of glory who are not dazzled by the luminous effusion. Are they, however, characterised by what they see rather than by the function they perform? I believe this is what Cardinal Zurla pointed out in

34 Leo the Great, *Sermons*, 38 (LI), 4, 28–29.

35 Just and Pasteur according to Von Einem, *Die "Verklärung Christi" und die "Heilung des Besessenen" von Raffael* 323. Felicissimus and Agapitus according to G. Mellini, "In margine alla *Trasfigurazione* di Raffaello", *Critica d'Arte* 10, 59–60 (1963), 39–53, 30. For a different identification, see King, "Liturgical and Commemorative Allusions".

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

FIGURE 12.6 Raphael, *Preparatory drawing for the upper part of the Transfiguration* (ca. 1518–1519). Red chalk over stylus, 24.6 × 35 cm
CHATSWORTH (DERBYSHIRE), TRUSTEES OF THE CHATSWORTH SETTLEMENT, INV. 904

1835 in his description of the painting: he saw represented, in three places and under three species, the triple demonstration of the truth of Christ: prophetic (in the upper half), thaumaturgical (in the lower half), and finally that truth 'deduced from martyrdom', he says, in the figures of the two deacons.[36] This *deduction* is made possible by the phatic and even admonitorial function that the two figures are in a position to fulfil in the margins of the painting. Witnesses of Christ and semiotic agents in the economy of the vision, they manifest the attitude of devotional reception to which the viewer may conform. The liminal place or the threshold they are assigned to – without prejudging the imperatives of the commission – is particularly highlighted by the various studies that prepare the painting. Both characters appear from the very first version of the painting, in the foreground and on the right [Fig. 12.3]. They are also integrated in a subsequent study for the upper part of the *Transfiguration* [Fig. 12.6]. In that regard, their migration from the position traditionally assumed in the

36 *Dissertazione del Cardinale Zurla sull'unità del soggetto nel quadro della Trasfigurazione di Raffaello* (Rome: 1835) 104, quoted by Arasse, *Les visions de Raphaël* 450.

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

devotional painting by the Holy Intercessors contributes to a certain dislocation of the figurative space.

Second, it is indeed for its testimony, but a reserved or suspended testimony, that the glory of Christ is manifested: 'As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead"' (Matt. 17:9). It is already as witnesses that Elijah and Moses are involved in the vision of the transfigured Christ; according to St Augustine, the colloquium of the vision is structured by the two testimonies, that of the prophetic word (Elijah) and that of the law (Moses).[37] This draws attention to Peter's second epistle in which, precisely, the double condition of the testimony, the *aside* and the *secrecy*, is made explicit by an image. Peter introduces himself as *testis*, eyewitness of the revealed glory on the mountain (2 Peter 1:16). The testimony he can now deliver – the word guaranteed by the vision – is also for Peter the fulfilment of the prophetic word grasped in an image whose intimacy with Raphael's painting has been highlighted by Posner.[38] The prophetic message is, according to Peter, 'like a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts' (2 Peter 1:19). The opening to the horizon on the right and the luminous and messianic moment of the dawn is in fact a *figure* introduced by Raphael, which will be particularly studied and notably taken up by Veronese, in the *Transfiguration* he painted for the Cathedral of Santa Maria de Montagnana (1556). Posner's reading may seem very literal: 'Raphael's painting illustrates this passage with remarkable fidelity, from the dawn which in fact points to the transfigured Christ who shines in [heavenly] glory above the darkness'.[39] In any case, we perceive the conditions of figurability that these light sources, 'dark place', and 'sunrise' fulfil, and specifically the close connection between *visuality* and *expectation* from which the testimony operates, according to Peter. So that the dawn, between light and darkness, forms the sensitive image of time unfolded by the messianic meaning of the testimony.

37 'Quod testimonium habet a lege et prophetis', Augustinus, *Enarrationes in psalmos*, *in psalmum 110*, 1. 19 (Paris: 2013) 210. On the theme of vision and its corporeal or spiritual nature according to St Augustine (sermons 78 and 79), see J. Pintard, "Remarques sur la Transfiguration dans l'oeuvre de Saint Augustin", *Studia patristica* 11 (Berlin: 1972) 335–340; and Kleinbub, *Vision and Visionary in Raphael*, who bases his analysis of Raphael's *Transfiguration* on the distinctions made by Augustine.

38 Posner, "Luministic Imagery in the Iconography of the *Transfiguration*", in *Leonardo and Central Italian Art* 43–47. Posner also relies on Luke 9:30–32 to see in the tangent light of the landscape in the background the dawn following the night of the Transfiguration rather than a twilight (ibidem, note 4, 83).

39 Ibidem, 44.

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

We may thus look at the gap between the place of the transfiguration and the place of the presentation of the lunatic son, this empty distance that does not stop acting as conditioned by the visual and temporal *montage* of the mystery.

4 *In Absentia*

The association of the theophanic vision with another scene is usual in the tradition of typological pairings, moralized Bibles, and books of hours, however, more rarely with a second episode of the life of Christ. Here is a distant but suggestive example [Fig. 12.7]: the illustration of the Floreffe Bible, combining the Transfiguration and the Last Supper, that is to say, the proclamation of the Eucharistic mystery. Both scenes are isolated by a central margin, an aniconic interval into which the feet of the apostles James and John encroach. In this picture, the temporal relationship implied by the figurative conception of history is expressed as the visual modality of a split.

In a more complex way, the *Transfiguration* of Sebastiano del Piombo painted in the half-dome of the Borgherini Chapel in San Pietro in Montorio, completed by the *Flagellation* on the wall above the altar [Figs. 12.8–12.9], organizes in the architectural and spatial order a figurative tension between glory and humiliation, sovereignty and humility, a tension also expressed in the contrasting modes of the chiaroscuro in the lower part and a certain *cangiantismo* in the upper part.[40] The association of the two moments in history and the two modes of being of Christ, here derived from the architecture of the chapel as a framing apparatus, however painted or feigned, requires nonetheless to be assumed in the protensive dimension of the gaze. If the column Christ is tied to upholds the gaze in the vertical axis and makes it possible to pass from the man of sorrow to the glorified Christ, the spacing it invites us to cross presupposes that the viewer assimilates it as an oriented expectation.

Although it is known that Sebastiano suspended his work in the Borgherini Chapel between 1517 and 1518 and only returned to the *Flagellation* at some point before May 1519, the chronological details are difficult to establish; what was the state of progress of Sebastiano's *Transfiguration* when it was adjourned?[41] In March 1524, when Sebastiano's *Transfiguration* was publicly unveiled, Raphael's altarpiece was already displayed above the main altar. Many elements argue for a closer comparison between Raphael's and Sebastiano's *Transfigurations*, in the context of a famous rivalry. They were not

40 On this point, see Hall, *Color and Meaning* 138f.

41 See M. Hirst, *Sebastiano del Piombo* (Oxford: 1984) 49–65.

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

FIGURE 12.7 Author of the Floreffe Bible, *Full-page miniature in two registers of the Transfiguration and the Last Supper* (ca. 1156)
LONDON, BRITISH LIBRARY, ADD MS 17738, F4R

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

FIGURE 12.8 Sebastiano del Piombo, *Transfiguration* (1516–1524)
FRESCO. BORGHERINI CHAPEL, SAN PIETRO IN MONTORIO, ROME

FIGURE 12.9 Sebastiano del Piombo, *Flagellation* (1516–1524). Mural painting in oil and fresco
BORGHERINI CHAPEL, SAN PIETRO IN MONTORIO, ROME

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

FIGURE 12.10
Raphael, *Study for the Resurrection of Christ*.
Pen and brown ink
MUSÉE BONNAT, BAYONNE, INV. 683

only contiguous and contemporary, they may both refer to the ideas Amedeo Menes da Silva expressed in his *Apocalypsis Nova*, although to varying degrees, as Jungic convincingly argues.[42]

In any case, judging by Raphael's radical transformations since the first *modello*, by a certain lightening of the iconographic apparatus in favour of the dynamic relations that finally animate the field of vision, we are led to note the attraction that the resurrection pattern exerted, and especially the assimilation of the ideas that Raphael had projected for an altarpiece he never painted [Fig. 12.10].[43] What is therefore most relevant is the inclusion of the typological interval or prefigurative tension as an immanent limit to place, space, and history, limits that the Transfiguration event unveils. The light without shade that Christ takes on does not only correspond with the chiaroscuro enveloping the lower scene of the painting. Here, the power of the origin *as an act* – the theophany – is doubled and reversed into the potency of the image itself, from its blind background and a certain *lack* in the place. More precisely, it is the

42 Jungic, 'Joachimist Prophecies'.

43 P. Joannides, *The Drawings of Raphael with a Complete Catalogue* (Los Angeles: 1983). On the altarpiece that was supposed to be the Resurrection and on its presumed location, see C. Gould, "Raphaël at S. Maria della Pace", *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 120, 1484 (1992) 78–88, in contradiction to M. Hirst's hypothesis, "The Chigi Chapel in S. Maria della Pace", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 24, 3/4 (July–Dec. 1961) 161–185.

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

FIGURE 12.11 Leonardo da Vinci, *Adoration* (1481–1482). Tempera mixed with oil on panel, 246 × 243 cm
GALLERIA DEGLI UFFIZI, FLORENCE

lack of the body – the absence of Christ – that makes the condition of the episode of the foreground comprehensible and designates it as a drama of faith and dissimilitude.

The pages that Posner devoted to Raphael's painting next to another painting, Leonardo da Vinci's *Adoration of the Magi* (1480), although unfinished [Fig. 12.11], offer a decisive insight.[44] Raphael would have found in the new structure of the *Adoration of the Magi* the means to correlate a human event with what goes beyond the limits of time and human space. From one painting

44 Posner, "Leonardo in Rome: The Genesis of Raphael's *Transfiguration*", in *Leonardo and Central Italian Art: 1515–1550*, 3–10, 8. Raphael's debt to Leonardo is also the subject of D.A. Brown, "Leonardo and Raphael's *Transfiguration*", in Frommel C.L. – Winner M. (eds.), *Raffaello a Roma* (Rome: 1986) 237–243.

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

to the other, the issue is not so much of changing appearance but of discovering limits through the temporality inherent in the *epi-theo-phanic* event. This would be the challenge of transposing Leonardo's figurative schema and reorganizing his conjunctive and disjunctive elements into a system of 'simultaneous contrasts'.[45] In Leonardo's *Adoration* as in Raphael's *Transfiguration*, the horizon is positioned high up, the foreground deeply curved, blocked in the centre by a flattened mound, opening to the right onto a distant landscape. In both paintings, there is, in fact, a conjunction of two types of spaces set at different heights of points of view, a foreground and a background organized by autonomous contents of meanings, distinct from each other, without any space figured between them. In both paintings, the chiaroscuro – the *certà oscurità* – shrouds the foreground and organizes its surface like a relief, while the clarity of the background is associated with depth. However, the leonardian model remains synthetic, subordinating one plane and one scene to the other by maintaining the structure of the linear and atmospheric perspective; it offers a coherent optical experience. In short, Raphael accentuates the disjunctive forces of the leonardian visual structure and breaks the subsidiarity of the plans. The subordination of the whole to the epiphanic nucleus in Leonardo's *Adoration* gives way in the *Transfiguration* to a dissociation, and the epiphanic centre itself to an absence that is the fundamental motif of the episode in the foreground: the disciples' impotency to heal the lunatic. But this effective absence has a peculiar place in the figurative scheme of Raphael's painting: the diagonal obscure spacing that separates the two groups of figures in the lower half of *The Transfiguration*. This absence acts so that the viewer, caught up in the trap of the disjunction, is tempted to perceive – in the contours of the lack – a potential figure. The historian Von Einem first made this suggestion;[46] Posner goes further, comparing Raphael's altarpiece with Leonardo's *Adoration of the Magi*, and Louis Marin built on this 'syncopation' a metapictorial hypothesis, 'discerning beside the sister's face, […] an empty face figuring absence: the terrifying mask of the neutral'.[47] The *figurative absence* of Christ thus becomes the very ultimate object of the viewer's gaze.[48]

45 Posner, *Leonardo and Central Italian Art* 9.

46 Von Einem, *Die "Verklärung Christi" und die "Heilung des Besessenen" von Raffael* 325. Posner stressed: 'Von Einem senses this absence so powerfully that he hypothesizes a missing Christ figure at the center of Raphael's "original" composition', *Leonardo and Central Italian Art*, note 37, 53.

47 Marin, "Entreglose 6: Transfiguration – Défiguration", in *Pouvoirs de l'image: gloses*, 250–259, 259.

48 'Il se pourrait bien que l'extraordinaire puissance, la toute-puissante violence imaginale de la Transfiguration de Raphaël se situe là, dans la fascination que le tableau exerce par

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

FIGURE 12.12 Detail of Fig. 12.1: apostles

Finally, the pictorial enigma of the opacity within Raphael's altarpiece operates on the basis of *latency*, as Erich Auerbach asserts, assumed by the evangelical narrative. It is rather a matter of time than of space. The empty dark distance between the two halves of Raphael's altarpiece is just underlined by the deictic gestures of the protagonists of the *istoria*, and significantly of the apostle who designates an "over there", the "elsewhere" of the Tabor, but can neither be aware of nor see what is happening there [Fig. 12.12]. This gesture, which emphasises the drama of powerlessness and lack of faith, condenses the semiotic economy of the painting. While ensuring the heterotopy of its high and low halves, it assumes for the viewer the double temporal modality of the spacing from which it is cut out: both "suspense" and "expectation". The intense darkness offers, I would say, the conditions of figurability for a deep connection, if not coextensiveness, between the "here" of immanence and the temporality of imminence, in the dimension of the *istoria*, the healing of the lunatic, as also in the register of hoped-for salvation, the imminence of a presence made partially known through the transitory signs of a plenary or beatific vision. From the messianic perspective, as adduced in the epistles of Pauls and Peter, *imminence* is the very temporality of secrecy, or put differently, secrecy is time made imminent.

ce lieu entrouvert entre deux groupes de figures et entre deux registres de son espace, ce lieu où il n'y a, à proprement parler, rien à lire ni à voir, sinon le regard ou l'objet même du désir que le fantasme met en scène.' Ibidem, 259.

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

Bibliography

Arasse D., "Extases et visions béatifiques à l'apogée de la Renaissance: quatre images de Raphaël," in *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome: Moyen-Age, Temps modernes* 84, 2 (1972) 403–492.

Auerbach E., *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur* (Bern: 1946).

Augustinus, *Enarrationes in psalmos, in psalmum 110*, 1.19 (Paris: 2013).

Barbieri C., "The Competition between Raphael and Michelangelo and Sebastiano's Role in It", in Hall M.B. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Raphael* (Cambridge: 2005) 141–164.

Belting H., *Bild und Kult: Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst* (Munich: 1990).

Belting H., "Image, Medium, Body: A New Approach to Iconology", *Critical Inquiry* 31, 2 (2005) 302–319.

Bendersky G., "Remarks on Raphael's 'Transfiguration'", *Notes in the History of Art* 14, 4 (1995) 18–25.

Brock M., "Le possédé dans la Transfiguration de Raphaël: un détail?" in *Daniel Arasse: Historien de l'art* (Paris: 2010) 153–164.

Brown D., "Leonardo and Raphael's Transfiguration", in Frommel C.L. – Winner M. (eds.), *Raffaello a Roma* (Rome: 1986) 237–243.

Brown D., "The Ascension and Transfigured Bodies", in Hart T.A. – Guthrie S.R. (eds.), *Faithful Performances: Enacting Christian Tradition* (Aldershot: 2007) 257–272.

Burckhardt J. – Humphrey P., *The Altarpiece in Renaissance Italy* (New York: 1988).

Caron L., "Choice Concerning Modes of Modelling During the High Renaissance and After", *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 48 (1985) 476–89.

Cassegrain G., *Représenter la vision: Figuration des apparitions miraculeuses dans la peinture italienne de la Renaissance* (Arles: 2017).

Chastel A., *Marsile Ficin et l'art* (Geneva: 1996).

Cranston J., "Tropes of Revelation in Raphael's Transfiguration", *Renaissance Quarterly* 56, 1 (2003) 1–25.

Damisch H., *Théorie du nuage: Pour une histoire de la peinture* (Paris: 1972).

Daniélou J., *Sacramentum futuri: essai sur les origines de la typologie biblique* (Paris: 1950).

Eikema Hommes M. van, "Discoloration or Chiaroscuro? An Interpretation of the Dark Areas in Raphael's 'Transfiguration of Christ'", *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 28, 1/2 (2000–2001) 4–43.

Einem H. Von, *Die "Verklärung Christi" and die "Heilung des Besessenen" von Raffael* (Wiesbaden: 1966).

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

Ficino Marsilio, *Liber de sole et lumine* (Antonio Miscomini – Florence: 1493).

Ficino Marsilio, *Métaphysique de la lumière* (*opuscules, 1476–1492*), trans. J. Reynaud – S. Galland (Paris: 2008).

Forte J.C., "Fictive Truths and Absent Presence in Raphael's 'Transfiguration'", *Notes in the History of Art* 3, 4 (1984) 45–56.

Goethe J.W. von, *Italian Journey*, trans. W.H. Auden and E. Mayer (London: 1970).

Golzio V., *Raffaello nei documenti, nelle testimonianze dei contemporanei e nella letteratura del suo secolo* (1936; reprint, Gregg International – Farnborough, Hants: 1971).

Gombrich E.H., "The Ecclesiastical Significance of Raphael's Transfiguration", in *Ars auro prior: Studia Ioanni Bialostocki sexagenario dicata* (Warsaw: 1981) 241–243.

Gombrich E.H., *New Light on Old Masters: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance IV* (Oxford: 1986).

Gould C., "Raphaël at S. Maria della Pace", *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 120, 1484 (1992) 78–88.

Green B., *The Soteriology of Leo the Great* (New York: 2008).

Greenstein J.M., "'How Glorious the Second Coming of Christ': Michelangelo's Last Judgment and the Transfiguration", *Artibus et Historiae* 10, 20 (1989) 33–57.

Guastini D., "Transfiguration, figure, figurabilité chez Louis Marin", *La part de l'œil* 31 (2017–18) 49–59.

Hall M.B., *Color and Meaning: Practice and Theory in Renaissance Painting* (Cambridge: 1992).

Henry T. – Joannides P., *Raphaël: Les dernières années* (Paris: 2012).

Herbert J.D., "The Son That Does Not Shine in Raphael's Transfiguration", *World and Image* 24, 2 (2008) 167–198.

Hirst M., "The Chigi Chapel in S. Maria della Pace", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 24, 3/4 (Jul.–Dec. 1961) 161–185.

Hirst M., *Sebastiano del Piombo* (Oxford: 1984) 49–65.

Humphrey P. – Kemp M. (eds.), *The Altarpiece in the Renaissance* (Cambridge – New York: 1991).

Joannides P., *The Drawings of Raphael with a Complete Catalogue* (Los Angeles: 1983).

Jungic J., "Joachimist Prophecies in Sebastiano del Piombo's Borgherini's Chapel and Raphael's Transfiguration", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 51 (1988) 66–83.

King C., "The Liturgical and Commemorative Allusions in Raphael's Transfiguration and Failure to Heal", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 45 (1982) 148–159.

Kleinbub K., "Raphael's Transfiguration as Visio-Devotional Programme", *Art Bulletin* 90 (2008) 367–93.

Kleinbub K., *Vision and Visionary in Raphael* (University Park, PA: 2011).

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

Lamarche P., "Transfiguration du Seigneur", *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité: ascétique et mystique, doctrine et histoire*, 17 vols. (Paris: 1991), vol. 15, 1148–1151.

Leo the Great, "A Homily Delivered on the Saturday before the Second Sunday in Lent – On the Transfiguration", 38 (LI), in Freeland J.P. – Conway A.J. (trans.), *Sermons* (Washington, DC: 1995) 1–8.

Léon le Grand, Sermons, ed. A. Chavasse – trans. D.R. Dolle, 3 vols. (Paris: 2004), vol. 3, 38–64.

Libina M., " 'False Prophecies,' Scripture, and the Crisis of Mediation in Early Modern Rome: Sebastiano del Piombo's Borgherini Chapel in San Pietro in Montorio", *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 11, 1 (2018) 67–104, 78.

Linke A., "Vasari and The Transfiguration of Christ: Converting the Testaments and Competing with Predecessors", in Melion W.S. – Clifton J. – Weemans M. (eds.), *Imago Exegetica: Visual Images as Exegetical Instruments, 1400–1700* (Leiden – Boston: 2014) 923–958.

Loerke W.C., "Observations on the Representation of Doxa in the Mosaics of Santa Maria Maggiore, and Saint Catherine's, Sinaï", *Gesta* 20, 1 (1981) 15–22.

Mancinelli F., "La Trasfigurazione e la Pala di Monteluce: Considerazioni sulla loro tecnica esecutiva alla luce dei recenti restauri", in Shearman J. – Hall M.B. (eds.), *The Princeton Raphael Symposium: Science in the Service of Art History* (Princeton: 1990) 149–60.

Marin L., *Pouvoirs de l'image: gloses* (Paris: 1993).

Marin L., *Opacité de la peinture*, rev. ed. (Paris: 2006).

Mellini G., "In margine alla Trasfigurazione di Raffaello", *Critica d'Arte* 10, 59–60 (1963) 39–53.

Meyer Zur Capellen J., *Raphael: A Critical Catalogue of His Painting*, 3 vols. (Landshut: 2005), vol. 2, *The Roman Religious Paintings, ca. 1508–1520*, 195–209.

Morisi A.M., *Apocalypsis Nova: Ricerche sull'origine e la formazione del testo dello pseudo-Amadeo* (Rome: 1970).

Muir Wright R., "Created and Uncreated Light: The Transfiguration in Western Art", in Hart T.A. – Guthrie S.R. (eds.), *Faithful Performances: Enacting Christian Tradition* (Aldershot: 2007) 241–256.

Nagel A., *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art* (Cambridge: 2000) 25–135.

Oberhuber K., "Vorzeichnungen zu Raffaels 'Transfiguration' ", *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 4 (1962) 116–149.

Pardo di Figuera B., *Examen analytique du tableau de la Transfiguration de Raphaël*, trans. S.C. Croze-Magnan (Paris: 1805).

Pasti S., "L'Apocalypsis Nova, Giulio dei Medici e i quadri per la Cattedrale di Narbone", *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift* 81, 4 (2012) 231–237.

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV

Pastor L. von, *The History of the Popes from the Close of the Middle Ages*, 40 vols., 5th ed. (London: 1923–30).

Pintard J., "Remarques sur la Transfiguration dans l'oeuvre de Saint Augustin", *Studia patristica* 11 (1972) 335–340.

Poggi G. – Barocchi P. – Ristori R. (eds.), *Il Carteggio di Michelangelo* (Florence: 1965–83).

Pope-Hennessy J., *Raphael: The Wrightsman Lectures* (London: 1970).

Posner K.W.G., "Raphael's Transfiguration and the Legacy of Leonardo", *Art Quarterly* 35, 4 (1972) 343–374.

Posner K.W.G., *Leonardo and Central Italian Art* (*1515–1550*) (New York: 1974).

Preimesberger R., "Tragische Motive in Raffaels Transfiguration", in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 50 (1987) 88–115.

Reeves M. (ed.), *Prophetic Rome in the High Renaissance Period* (Oxford: 1992).

Ringbom S., *Icon to Narrative: The Rise of the Dramatic Close-up in Fifteenth-Century Devotional Painting* (Åbo: 1965).

Sancti Gregorii Homiliae in Hiezechihelem prophetam [Hom. in Ezech.], ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 142 (Turnholti: 1971).

Schillebeeckx E., *L'économie sacramentelle du salut* (*De sacramentele Heilseconomie*), trans. Y. van der Have (Fribourg: 2004).

Shearman J., *Raphael's Cartoons in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen and the Tapestries for the Sistine Chapel* (London: 1972).

Shearman J., "Raphael's Clouds, and Correggio's", in Sambucco Hamoud M. – Strocchi M.L. (eds.), *Studi su Raffaello: Atti del congresso internazionale di studi. Urbino-Firenze, 6–14 avril 1984* (Urbino: 1987), 657–668.

Shearman J., *Raphael in Early Modern Sources, 1483–1602*, 2 vols. (New Haven – London: 2003).

Stefaniak R., "Replicating Mysteries of the Passion: Rosso's Dead Christ with Angels", *Renaissance Quarterly* 45, 4 (1992) 677–738.

Stoichita V., *Visionary Experience in the Golden Age of Spanish Art* (London: 1995).

Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, ed. P. Caramello, 3 vols. (Turin: 1952).

Vasari Giorgio, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architetti* (Florence: 1568).

Vasoli C., "Notizie su Giorgio Benigno Salviati", in *Profezia e ragione: Studi sulla cultura del Cinquecento e del Seicento* (Naples: 1974), 15–127.

For use by the Author only | © 2020 Koninklijke Brill NV